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## Commuter-friendly businesses cited

■ **Business parks in Pleasanton and San Ramon included on the national list of the top places to commute**

By Lisa Vorderbruegg

CONTRA COSTA TIMES, WALNUT CREEK CALIF.  
KNIGHT RIDDER/TRIBUNE BUSINESS NEWS

Workers who want to know which Bay Area employers serve the choicest commuter benefits can now consult a menu.

In the only evaluation of its kind in the country, federal agencies unveiled today the first list of the best workplaces for commuters.

Eighty-three firms and public agencies have earned the right to wear the "Commuter Choice Employer 2002" label, a kind of good commuting seal of approval.

The East Bay factors prominently on the roll, particularly in San Ramon and Pleasanton, where two of the Bay Area's largest business parks have pioneered commuter services.

"If it is our intention as a city to encourage employers in San Ramon to provide commuter incentives for their employees, we felt we should start by setting an example," said Lisa Bobadilla, director of San Ramon's winning transportation program.

Sponsors at the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Transportation believe the recognition will encourage employers to help nudge workers out of their cars.

"Studies show that when employers are willing to provide incentives, they can change commuting behavior," said program director Robin Snyder with the EPA.

The key, Snyder said, is to convince employers that commuter benefits boost the bottom line.

Fewer cars not only produce less highway congestion and cleaner air. It also means that workers spend less time stuck in traffic, Snyder said. Employers have happier and more productive staffs. Commuter benefits may attract and keep higher-quality employees.

"The average commuter spends more than an entire workweek stuck in traffic each year,"

### FOR THE COMMUTERS

*The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation bestowed the title of certified commuter-friendly on the following East Bay firms and agencies:*

- **Aetna US Healthcare**, San Ramon
- **AT&T Broadband**, San Ramon
- **Bayer Corp.**, Berkeley
- **Bishop Ranch Transportation Centre**, San Ramon
- **California Indemnity Insurance**, Pleasanton
- **ChevronTexaco**, San Ramon
- **Chiron Corp.**, Emeryville
- **Cities of Berkeley, Pleasanton and San Ramon**
- **Hacienda Business Park Owners Association**, Pleasanton

Snyder said. "Every workday, congestion causes Bay Area commuters to spend more than 155,000 extra hours in traffic — that's 17 years and more than \$1.8 million of wasted productivity per day."

To win the commuter-friendly tag, organizations committed to seven tenets:

- Offer monthly transit or carpool subsidies, trade employees cash for free parking or provide a telecommuting program that cuts trips by 6 percent.
- Support three additional programs such as preferred parking for carpoolers, lockers and showers for bikers or ridesharing services.
- Subscribe to an emergency guaranteed ride home program.
- Appoint a person in-house to handle commuter benefits.
- Promote commuter benefits to employees.
- Commit to showing that at least 14 percent of a firm's workers do not drive alone to work.
- Report annually to the EPA.

Snyder's staff of nine helps firms implement commuter benefits and offers a Web site that calculates financial, environmental and traffic impacts. The EPA will publish the list annually.

For the Hacienda and Bishop Ranch business parks in the Tri-Valley, the checklist is a slam dunk.

Bishop Ranch firms spend \$750,000 a year

- **Integrated Science Solutions Inc.**, Walnut Creek
- **John Muir Medical Center**, Walnut Creek
- **Paychex Inc.**, Pleasanton
- **Penske Truck Leasing**, Pleasanton
- **Pixar Animation Studios**, Emeryville
- **PMI Mortgage Insurance**, Walnut Creek
- **ProBusiness Services of California**, Pleasanton
- **QRS Corp.**, Richmond
- **SBC Communications**, San Ramon
- **U.S. Department of Energy**, Livermore
- **UC Berkeley**, Berkeley

*For the full list or to find out how to apply for next year's award, visit [www.commuter-choice.gov](http://www.commuter-choice.gov), call 888-856-3131 or e-mail a request to [commuterchoice@epa.gov](mailto:commuterchoice@epa.gov).*

on commuter services. It runs 60 buses a day to BART stations, staffs a transportation center, and offers numerous incentives to its 30,000 employees.

At a time when transit ridership figures have plummeted, Bishop has seen double-digit increases in its express bus service. Air-quality experts have calculated that the park's programs cut 9,000 automobiles off Interstate 680 each day.

"We want the public to know that we take our commitment to help reduce air pollution and congestion seriously," said Marci McGuire, director of the Bishop Ranch Transportation Centre. "The commuter choice award helps us show the public that our services provide true benefits to our tenants and their employees."

Seeking the commuter-friendly label is "a no-brainer for us," said James Paxson, general manager for the Hacienda Business Park Owners Association in Pleasanton. "Because of the programs we offer, every tenant automatically qualifies for this recognition. Benefits really do matter."

Hacienda offers free Wheels bus passes for all workers, choice parking spots for carpoolers, cash incentives to try public transit, and technical assistance with commuter programs.